

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 6, line 7, with the following rewritten paragraph:

The platelet particles or nanoparticles are derivable from larger layered mineral particles. Any layered mineral capable of being intercalated may be employed in the present invention. Layered silicate minerals are preferred. The layered silicate minerals that may be employed include natural and artificial minerals. Non-limiting examples of more preferred minerals include montmorillonite, vermiculite, hectorite, saponite, hydrotalcites, kanemite, sodium octosilicate, magadite, and kenyaite. Mixed Mg and Al hydroxides may also be used. Various other clays can be used, such as ~~elaytene H.Y.~~ CLAYTONE® HY montmorillonite. Among the most preferred minerals is montmorillonite.